



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

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District Man Convicted of Murder, Other Charges In 2008 Killing of Innocent Bystander Caught in Gunfire - Defendant's Shots Also Wounded Two Other Innocent Victims -

WASHINGTON - Kerstan Leonard, 30, was convicted today of first-degree murder while armed and other charges in a shooting that killed one person and wounded two others near an apartment complex in Southeast Washington, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced.

Leonard, of Washington, D.C., was convicted following a trial in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. In addition to the murder charge, a jury found him guilty of two counts of assault with intent to kill while armed, and related firearms offenses. The Honorable Gerald I. Fisher, who presided at the trial, scheduled sentencing for September 9, 2011.

According to the government's evidence, Leonard was a drug dealer in the Stanton Glenn apartment complex in Southeast Washington. On December 5, 2008, at about 11:15 p.m., he participated in firing at least 22 shots in the 3000 block of Stanton Road SE, shooting into an apartment building in the 3000 block of Stanton Road SE occupied by his rivals.

Melody Williams, a 41-year old District resident, was struck by a bullet in the back and killed as she attempted to escape the gunfire. Ms. Williams, a night-shift nursing assistant at a District facility for the elderly, was awaiting a ride to work when she was killed. Her nieces, who were waiting with her outside the building, were also struck by gunfire, but survived.

Neither Ms. Williams nor her nieces had any connection to the drug rivalry that motivated the shooting. None of Leonard's intended targets were struck by gunfire. The gunfire also struck at least three vehicles parked in front of the building and traveled through multiple apartments.

In announcing the verdicts, U.S. Attorney Machen expressed his appreciation to the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and particularly praised the work of Detectives Norma Horne, Josh Branson, Gus Giannakoulis, James Wilson, Robert Cephas, Anthony Greene, and Robert Arrington; Officer Thomas Ellingsworth, and Mobile Crime Technicians Keith Slaughter, Kevin Jeter, Leather Strong, and Ridley Durham. U.S. Attorney Machen also commended U.S.

Attorney's Office Paralegals Fern Rhedrick and Debra Joyner; Information Technology Specialists Leif Heckling and Tracy Van Atta; Legal Interns Sarah Mortazavi and Chris Young, and Investigators Melissa Matthews and Nelson Rhone. Finally, he commended Assistant U.S. Attorneys Steve Wasserman and Sean Tonolli, who investigated and indicted the case, and J.P. Cooney and David Gorman, who prosecuted the case at trial.

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